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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled, "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and actions in the critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

Thematic issues before the Commission on the Status of Women

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. In accordance with the multi-year programme of work for 2002-2006 adopted by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 2001/4, the Commission on the Status of Women will review two thematic issues at its forty-sixth session in March 2002. The present analytical report includes the following two themes: (a) environmental management and mitigation of natural disasters: a gender perspective, and (b) eradicating poverty, including through the empowerment of women throughout the life cycle in a globalizing world.

2. In order to contribute to a further understanding of the issues and to assist the Commission in its deliberations, the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Department for Economic and Social Affairs convened two expert group meetings. One meeting, on "Environmental management and the mitigation of natural disasters: a gender perspective", took place in Ankara, from 6 to 9 November 2001, and the other, on "Empowerment of women throughout the life cycle as a transformative strategy for poverty eradication" took place in New Delhi, from 26 to 29 November 2001.

3. The present report is based on the analysis and conclusions of the above-mentioned expert group meetings, on the case studies and contributions provided by the experts from various regions and by the representatives from other United Nations entities, including the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the United Nations Inter-Agency Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and on the literature on the subject.

4. The recommendations contained in the present report are directed towards Governments, the United Nations system, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector and various actors of civil society. The recommendations aim to expand an agenda for action to be taken at both the international and national levels to eradicate poverty as outlined in the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.

II. Environmental management and mitigation of natural disasters: a gender perspective

A. Efforts of the United Nations regarding environmental management and disaster risk reduction

5. Owing to the increasing frequency and severity of natural disasters in the world in the late 1980s, the General Assembly, in 1989, formally proclaimed the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction. The objective of the decade was to reduce casualties, property damage and social and economic disruption caused by natural disasters. In the 1980s, the worst effects of natural disasters were frequently linked to human behaviour and settlement patterns, with the result that natural hazards sometimes triggered technological disasters. Earthquakes can cause chemical spills and fires, while floods can cause contamination by hazardous material. In this regard, it was believed that technological and engineering solutions were needed for their mitigation. Gradually, the necessity of a multidisciplinary and intersectoral approach became apparent.[1]

6. At the Yokohama World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction (1994), a mid-term review of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, greater emphasis was placed on the role of social sciences in research, policy development and implementation and the links between disaster reduction and sustainable development were emphasized. The Yokohama Plan of Action for a Safer World (1994),[2] called upon States to stimulate community involvement and the empowerment of women as well as socially disadvantaged groups and emphasized the importance of incorporating women as well as men in all stages of disaster management programmes to promote capacity-building. Economics, media and information networks and vulnerability featured among the new disaster reduction issues to be further explored in the second half of the decade. Gender perspectives in disaster mitigation have been addressed mainly in the context of vulnerability or community involvement. Women's abilities to mitigate hazards and prevent disasters and to cope with and recover from the effects of disasters have not been sufficiently taken into account or built upon. A 10-year

review of the plan of action adopted in Yokohama will be initiated in 2002 as part of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, providing a valuable opportunity to address gender perspectives more comprehensively.

7. In Agenda 21, adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the bulk of references to women can be found in chapter 24, on global action for women, which focused on women's participation in national ecosystem management and control of environmental management.[3] Proposals for action included increasing the representation of women as decision makers, planners, technical advisers and managers in environment and development fields. However, the major groups concept has been largely rejected as contrary to the full understanding of a gender mainstreaming approach. Agenda 21 contains few references to natural disasters. However, in the preparatory process for the upcoming World Summit on Sustainable Development, which is to be held in Johannesburg, from 2 to 4 September 2002, natural disaster management is being considered as an increasingly important issue for sustainable development. Gender issues are also being raised in the context of environmental planning, decision-making and management and the impact of environmental degradation.

8. The Beijing Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995) recognized that the impact of environmental disasters on women and their responses to disaster needed further investigation.[4] Five years later, the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (2000) identified natural disasters and epidemics as emerging issues and noted that the social and economic impact of natural disasters and epidemics remained relatively invisible as a policy issue, in particular their impact on the status of women, gender relations and the achievement of gender equality.[5]

9. The twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century", considered the inefficiencies and inadequacies of existing approaches and intervention methods in responding to natural disasters as a recent challenge to gender equality. It also raised awareness of women's role as subsistence producers and users of environmental resources. The knowledge of both women and men of the conservation and management of such resources should be recognized to ensure sustainability. The special session recommended that Governments should be assisted in developing gender-sensitive strategies for the delivery of assistance and responses to humanitarian crises resulting from armed conflict and natural disasters.[6]

B. Environmental management and disasters: a gender perspective

1. The increase in all types of natural disasters

10. Over the last 10 years, natural disasters have claimed more than 650,000 lives and affected more than 210 million people worldwide. Countries with low to medium levels of human development have been most affected, accounting for 98 per cent of natural disaster casualties. For example, the total number of reported natural disasters in Africa increased from 52 in 1991 to 195 in 2000. Accounting only for easily quantifiable losses, the costs of disasters, including small-scale disasters, are extensive, diffuse and long-lasting. In 1999 alone, there were more than 700 disasters with widespread economic and social damage leading to the death of approximately 100,000 people.[7]

11. Particularly alarming is the increased frequency of small- or medium-impact disasters produced by recurrent floods or minor landslides, as well as slow onset disasters such as land degradation and drought caused by natural resource degradation and natural hazards, which do not receive adequate coverage or external recognition. These disasters do not figure in databases evaluating disaster impacts although their accumulated losses and combined costs are considerable. Some suggest that these losses and costs may approximate or even exceed those associated with large, but relatively infrequent, disasters. The succession of small- or medium-scale events can accentuate the vulnerability that culminates in major disasters. Managing and reducing risks, as opposed to emergency management and response is key to avoid worsening levels of disaster occurrence and loss, in particular in developing regions affected by regularly occurring small-scale disasters at the local level, including hydro-meteorological hazards such as floods and landslides. The critical role of local communities, civil society, municipal authorities in reducing disaster

loss and occurrence of small-scale disasters is most apparent in this context.

12. Reducing disaster risks involves the introduction of measures to avoid (prevention) or limit (mitigation and preparedness) the adverse impact of natural hazards and related environmental and technological disasters. Preparedness involves measures taken in advance to ensure an effective response to the impact of disasters. Gender is a critical aspect in the disaster process, yet there is little documentation on how to integrate gender concerns into risk reduction and environmental management.

2. Gender differences in environmental management

13. Since many disasters are caused by poor environmental management, it is useful first to have a look at existing gender differences and inequalities in the use and management of natural resources and environments. Studies have shown that women as well as men play a major role in the sustainable use and management of forest ecosystems, agricultural land, water and energy resources and the environment of human settlements at the local level.[8] Women in many parts of the world have the main responsibility for the supply of water for household use. They also play a predominant role in the provision of water for animals, crop growing and food processing. It is often the women who decide where and how to collect water and how to purify drinking water.

14. Women as well as men play important roles in food production, including food collection, farming, fishing and forestry. In most developing countries, women are responsible for half of the world's food production and produce between 60 and 80 per cent of the food.[9] In sub-Saharan Africa, women represent 65 per cent of the female labour force in agriculture and produce up to 80 per cent of basic food both for household consumption and for sale.[10] Consequently, women in developing countries are particularly affected by natural disasters and climate change, and, through them, their families' health and nutrition.

15. Steps have been taken to examine the gender specific impact of climate change, which is an issue of development and survival strategies and therefore has a direct impact on populations and their adaptation and vulnerability.[11] Besides the concentration of gases, including greenhouse gases that increase the rate of global warming, physical impacts such as rising sea levels, flooding low-lying delta areas and increasing salt water intrusion are putting the security of the most vulnerable communities at risk. Because of their roles, women are particularly affected. The socio-economic vulnerability of women and their ability to adapt may be exacerbated by the effects of climate change. In countries like Senegal, where the fishing industry is of great economic importance, climate change is likely to reduce seasonal fishing and consequently the income of women involved directly or indirectly in this industry. It is also likely to increase unemployment and raise the price of the fish, leading to nutritional and other related problems.[12]

16. Climate change will have a direct impact on human migrations as coastal flooding, drought, desertification, agricultural disruption and shoreline erosion will oblige millions of people to move looking for a more secure place to live and work. Women as key actors in the family, as major agricultural producers and as poorest populations will be among the most affected by these migrations. This will exacerbate already existing vulnerabilities and enlarge the gap between the rich and the poor.

17. There are major gaps in research on the linkage between gender, environmental management and disaster risk reduction at all levels, from climate change to local, small emergencies. Research is insufficient regarding the relationship between climate, natural hazards and related environmental vulnerability. There is also insufficient coordinated application of the results generated by research programmes at the national and international levels, including on climate change, desertification and drought.

18. There is a dearth of research on how gender differences and inequalities affect risk accumulation processes. The existing literature on gender and disasters focuses almost exclusively on impact and response. Case studies clearly demonstrate the important role that gender plays in disaster risk assessment although these have not yet been systematically compiled and analysed from a comparative perspective. The scarcity of data disaggregated by sex on disaster and environmental management is particularly marked. Effective dissemination strategies to ensure that research results are widely accessible to policy makers and planners at every level are lacking.

3. Gender and vulnerability in disaster

19. Vulnerability reduction and disaster risk reduction are closely linked. It is in this context that gender aspects came first to the forefront. Social vulnerability to disasters is a function of human action, social status and behaviour. It describes the degree to which a socio-economic system or physical assets are either susceptible or resilient to the impact of natural hazards and environmental changes. Social vulnerability is determined by the interplay of a combination of a number of factors, including hazard awareness, the condition of human settlements and infrastructure, legal systems, public policy and administration, the wealth of a given society and organized abilities in all fields of disaster and risk management. Social vulnerability to disasters can be linked to development practices that do not take into account susceptibility to natural hazards. The level of risk in relation to natural disasters in a society is determined by vulnerability, combined with the probability of the occurrence of a natural hazard (flood, drought, landslide, earthquake, volcanic eruptions, storm, cyclone) as well as the intensity of such a hazard.

20. Poor people may face greater exposure to risk factors such as poor housing, vulnerable location and limited access to information. They also have a lower capacity to cope.[13] When Hurricane Mitch, in 1999, affected 1.5 million people directly in Honduras and 850,000 in Nicaragua, with a total damage estimate of approximately $4.8 billion, the damage was not evenly distributed throughout the population. The most marginalized members of society, including small producers, street children and female-headed households were the most seriously affected among the poor.[14]

21. It is critical to understand the gender-specific vulnerabilities in order to address root causes and take risk reduction measures that are equitable, gender-sensitive and efficient. Case studies, first-person narratives and accounts from the field suggest that gender is a highly significant factor, both in the construction of social vulnerability to risk and in people's organized responses to hazards and disasters. Gender-based inequalities interact with social class, race and ethnicity and age, which put some women and girls at especially high risk. Gender inequalities with respect to enjoyment of human rights, political and economic status, land ownership, housing conditions, education, health, in particular reproductive and sexual health, and exposure to violence, make women more vulnerable before, during and after disasters.

4. Gender differences in the disaster cycle

22. Incorporating a gender perspective in early warning, disaster risk reduction and environmental management is challenging. It involves bringing together individuals from separate areas of academic interest, policy concern and institutional responsibility and having them focus on hazards, disasters, development, resource management and development issues. In issuing flood warnings, for example, the majority of attention and resources have been brought to bear on tools such as hydrology and meteorology, focusing on the use of satellite technology to forecast approaching weather systems and technological hardware for the delivery of early information to other parts of the warning system. The social context, including the gender dimension, has only recently appeared on the hazards agenda and many professionals in the field still see it as largely irrelevant or outside their sphere of influence or capability. Experts in this field, which like all scientific and engineering professions has a low representation of women, give little attention to the role of NGOs and citizen groups in developing informal warning systems.[15]

23. Women and men have different coping strategies in the disaster cycle. Damages and fatalities in earthquakes, for example, are time and space-specific. Depending on the type of disaster and local circumstances, a larger number of casualties among women than men have been documented in some cases. Earthquakes in Italy (1976), India (1993) and Afghanistan (1998) reported greater fatality and injury among women.[16] Residential buildings, often damaged in greater numbers, tend to be occupied during the day mostly by women, children and the elderly. If women's mobility is restricted due to cultural and social constraints and they do not receive timely warning of and information about hazards and risks, or are not able to act upon them swiftly, their survival may be at risk. Evidence indicates that women's seclusion at home, the imposition of dress codes and lack of physical exercise may impact negatively on women's disaster preparedness and possibilities for escape.

24. When women and men confront routine or catastrophic disasters, their responses tend to mirror

their status, role and position in society. Accounts of disaster situations worldwide show that responsibilities follow traditional gender lines, with women's work carrying over from traditional tasks in the home and household, and men taking leadership positions. Although the precise actions taken by individuals may vary, men in general take on the "public" and visible sphere in crisis situations created by environmental disasters while women manage the "private" sphere of activities where they often remain invisible to outsiders. While men may undertake risky recovery efforts after disasters, women work in the shelters and organize food, water and medical supplies.

25. Case studies indicate that women's economic insecurity increases and their workload expands during disasters, due to deteriorating working conditions, increased family and community work and intensified care-giving responsibilities. After the 2001 earthquakes in El Salvador, women in urban and rural areas dedicated an average of 14 to 16 hours daily to emergency and rehabilitation tasks, including taking care of children and injured, cooking and cleaning the shelter, washing clothes, carrying water or firewood and queuing for food supplies.[17]

26. During disasters and their aftermath, women lose critical productive assets such as gardens, farm land, animals, equipment necessary for informal work at home, household utensils and jewellery. Self-employed women, whether they are street vendors or informal-sector workers in Mexico or owners of home-based childcare or bookkeeping businesses in the United States of America or Canada, lose their sources of income.[18] A socio-economic damage assessment of the 2001 earthquakes in El Salvador by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) showed clearly that 85 per cent of urban and 64 per cent of rural women lost their employment outside the house. Moreover, 94 per cent suffered loss of goods directly linked to income generation and goods considered women's property. In view of the household's key role in social and economic relations in the community and the high proportion of women with small businesses in their homes, this loss is significant. Damages to home gardening businesses (farming, breeding and fruit and vegetables cropping), an important asset in the subsistence economy, were also high.[17] When home gardens and livestock in northern Bangladesh were washed away by floods, women lost their income generating activities and, unlike men, could not seek work outside the home. Evidence from disaster relief in the Middle East suggests that women try to secure their families' household assets, which are basic for their survival after the disaster. Many women become single heads of household with no source of income or family support if men migrate in search of employment as a consequence of disaster.

27. Gender-biased attitudes and stereotypes may complicate and extend the period of women's recovery, if, for example, they do not seek or receive timely care for physical and mental trauma experienced in disasters. Women may become victim of domestic violence or sexual abuse, in particular if they have to stay for long periods in crowded shelters that offer little privacy. Women's relative longevity compared to men's, their larger number among the very old and their reproductive roles may create mobility and health constraints. The need to travel long distances with children or family members to seek medical care may make access to treatment and prevention even harder.[19] More girls than boys are forced to discontinue education when schools are demolished as they cannot easily attend distant schools. Older women, in particular very old women with disabilities, pregnant and nursing women and those with small children are often most at risk, often left behind or left out, or the last to leave in cases of emergency because of lack of knowledge, mobility and resources. Clearly, high rates of female poverty are an important factor in increasing women's risk in disasters.

28. Neither effective management of natural resources, nor effective policies to reduce risks or respond to natural disasters are possible if programming is not grounded in an understanding of how specific gender differences and inequalities affect women and men in disasters. Lack of such an understanding can lead to the unwitting reinforcement of gender inequalities and other dimensions of social vulnerability in the provision of emergency relief and process of long-term reconstruction. Failure to recognize women's economic activities in the informal sector may reduce their access to much needed economic recovery assistance and undermine perceptions of women as full contributors to the recovery process. Women's informal activities do not entitle them to receive compensation or credits to start their lives anew. In many countries, women's debts, incurred mainly in the margin of the formal financial

market, are not included in recovery programmes, often increasing their vulnerability and preventing their economic recovery.

29. Disaster recovery efforts often do not recognize women's and men's capabilities, and reinforce or exacerbate existing gender and other inequalities. Nevertheless, many opportunities arise in post-disaster periods to build women's capacities and challenge gender stereotypes, for example, that of women as passive victims and men as invulnerable heroes. Women take on added responsibilities in the household and community following disasters, through which they acquire or develop new skills and overcome internalized barriers to achievement. Men's traditional roles may also expand to involve them more directly in the care of dependants or management of water resources. Increased housing security, training in non-traditional skills, political mobilization and other positive changes for women may follow in the wake of even the most destructive disasters if structural changes are envisioned and supported. For example, after the 1999 cyclone in India, women took an active role in the interaction on social issues. In rehabilitation efforts after the 1988 earthquake in Armenia, rural women, empowered through training, began to see themselves as capable of providing solutions to their own problems, thus significantly raising their self-esteem.[20]

30. There are development opportunities inherent in post-disaster reconstruction that can generate transformation towards gender equality and empowerment. The "window of opportunity" for social change in the wake of disasters may be used to introduce new policies, programmes and legislation and make efforts to change stereotyped attitudes and behaviour. These opportunities may be missed due to an excessive focus on relief assistance without a long-term development or equality perspective. The result can be all too often the reconstruction of vulnerability and gender inequality rather than the promotion of more equitable and sustainable conditions and women's empowerment during the post-disaster "window of opportunity".

31. In order to utilize these development opportunities, at least two factors need to be exploited. First, disasters may highlight particular areas of vulnerability, including gender-based vulnerability, that need to be reduced through more sustainable environmental, economic and human development. Second, immediately following a disaster, the political climate may be conducive to much needed legal, economic and social change, which can begin to reduce structural vulnerabilities in areas such as human rights, governance, land reform, skills development, employment, housing and social solidarity. Women's empowerment and promotion of equal rights for women could lead to the active involvement of women in future disaster prevention and the integration of a gender perspective in disaster processes.

C. Recommendations

32. Effective disaster risk reduction requires the close interlinkage between sound environmental management and sustainable development. Disaster risk management should be part of the overall development process, using a gender-sensitive and cross-sectoral approach. On this premise, the expert group meeting made the following recommendations.

1. Policies, budgeting and finance

33. Governments at all levels, international organizations, including the United Nations system, donors, with the assistance of NGOs and other actors in civil society and the private sector, as appropriate, should:

(a) Make sound environmental management, risk management and gender equality an integral part of sustainable development and vice versa;

(b) Create and implement, with the involvement of community groups and women's groups, comprehensive rural and urban development strategies, including land use plans, which provide opportunities to prevent and mitigate damage caused by hazards;

(c) Include gender-based hazard mapping and social and environmental risk assessment at the appraisal stage of all development projects, involving women and men equally at all levels of the assessment;

(d) Recognize the occurrence of frequent and ongoing small- and medium-scale environmental emergencies and adapt gender-sensitive disaster management policies and programmes accordingly;

(e) Design and implement gender-sensitive economic recovery projects and provide economic assets such as credit to women;

(f) Incorporate gender perspectives in resource allocation for environmental management and disaster risk reduction activities and explicitly support the integration of socio-economic and gender perspectives in all projects;

(g) Establish innovative gender-sensitive financing mechanisms and provide other resources to support local authorities and community initiatives for environmental management and disaster risk reduction, including those aimed at the reduction of the frequency and occurrence of disasters;

(h) Develop codes of conduct for private sector enterprises, such as insurance companies, and hold them accountable to both women and men on equal terms with respect to post-disaster compensation for human and property losses;

(i) Promote interventions that would expand both women's and men's livelihood opportunities and reduce women's particular vulnerabilities in disaster contexts, and encourage the private sector to stimulate local employment and sustainable socio-economic development to that effect.

2. Legislation and human rights

34. Governments at all levels, parliaments, the judiciary and international organizations, including the United Nations system, NGOs and other actors of civil society, as appropriate, should:

(a) Introduce or strengthen administrative and legal measures to support gender-sensitive environmental management and disaster risk reduction;

(b) Monitor the full enjoyment by women of their human rights throughout the disaster cycle and revise, where appropriate, national legislation and policies with a view to ensuring their consistency with existing international norms and standards;

(c) Protect, promote and ensure women's equal right to own land and raise awareness of the importance of secure land tenure for reducing disaster vulnerability and facilitating recovery from disasters;

(d) Adopt legislation that recognizes both women and men as heads of households for post-disaster entitlements such as land, housing and all types of financial and in-kind compensation;

(e) Invite the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to request statistics and other information from States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, on how they ensure the full enjoyment by women of human rights in disaster circumstances and women's equal participation at all levels of environmental management and disaster risk reduction;

(f) Encourage the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to draft a general recommendation on women and environmental management and disaster risk reduction to provide a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between women's human rights and the circumstances, problems and opportunities women encounter with respect to their human rights in all phases of disaster;

(g) Provide information in particular to women on the complaint and inquiry mechanism under the optional protocol to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

3. Participation, partnership and community involvement

35. Governments at all levels, international organizations, including the United Nations system and humanitarian organizations, the private sector, NGOs, including community-based organizations, as appropriate, should:

(a) Enhance women's participation in decision-making in public administration and in governmental structures at all levels so that women as well as men can play a key role in defining building standards, land-use, planning processes and infrastructure construction and management in order to prevent disaster emanating from inadequate planning, risky land use and environmental stress;

(b) Involve more women in risk reduction activities and expand opportunities for women to participate in decision-making and assume leadership roles in organizations working in sustainable development and disaster risk reduction;

(c) Make local residents full and equal partners in the development of safer communities and incorporate the indigenous knowledge, skills and capacities, particularly of poor women and disadvantaged groups, into environmental management and disaster risk reduction;

(d) Involve women professionals, women's national machineries and women's community groups

in collaborative, cross-sectoral initiatives to reduce risks.

4. Media, information and dissemination

36. Governments at all levels and international organizations, including the United Nations system, mass media, the private sector, academia, NGOs and community-based organizations, as appropriate, should:

(a) Make efforts to combat gender stereotypes and biases, including gender myths that reinforce stereotyped representations of women, and address the lack of gender perspectives in government programmes, the activities of NGOs and the media;

(b) In all information and dissemination activities, take into account gender differences in the understanding of women and men about their respective capacities and vulnerabilities in disaster contexts;

(c) Increase women's equal access to risk management information through gender-sensitive early warning systems and target specific social groups for early-warning to ensure that gender-specific needs and circumstances are recognized and to encourage women to take action on warnings in a timely and appropriate manner;

(d) Collaborate in the creation of networks that promote community access to gender-sensitive information and communication technologies and support information exchange on environmental management and disaster risk reduction;

(e) Recognize the right to freedom of information and create and adapt effective and gender-sensitive methods of information dissemination and outreach adapted to a wide range of audiences (for example international organizations, ministries and government bureaux and grass-roots organizations).

5. Education, training and capacity-building

37. Governments at all levels and international organizations, including the United Nations system, the private sector, academia, NGOs and community-based organizations, as appropriate, should:

(a) Incorporate gender equality goals into every aspect of capacity-building and strengthening of institutional arrangements to address disaster risk reduction as an ongoing function, including through the adoption of legislation on reducing risk, land-use regulation, building codes and environmental protection;

(b) Support capacity-building at local levels, including through identifying women's and men's needs and opportunities, elaborating and selecting appropriate training materials and methodologies, establishing collaborative partnerships with training institutions, facilitating workshops and monitoring results;

(c) Promote the education and training of women in environmental and natural sciences and enhance women's participation as specialists in spheres where men dominate (for example, in hazard and disaster assessments, occupational health and safety, science and technology, emergency service and civil protection) across all levels of government and in emergency services and professions;

(d) Provide training and training resources on the linkage between gender, development and disaster management to ministries, emergency authorities and practitioners who are involved, inter alia, in the promotion of sustainable development, gender equality, health, environmental science and businesses;

(e) Establish education initiatives with an integrated and gender-sensitive approach to environmental management and disaster reduction, in support of the Inter-Agency Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and its goal of increasing public awareness and participation.

6. Research, data collection and methodology development

38. Governments and international organizations, including the United Nations system, academia, NGOs and the private sector, as appropriate, should:

(a) Introduce a gender perspective into ongoing research on the relationships between climate, natural hazards, disaster and related environmental vulnerability and foster the coordinated application of these results;

(b) Encourage the utilization of gender-sensitive indicators as important tools for assessing environmental vulnerability, risks and monitoring;

(c) Undertake a comparative analysis of gender as a factor in the social construction of vulnerability in disasters at varying scales and throughout the disaster process;

(d) Ensure that particular attention be given to researching continuously occurring small- and medium-scale disasters and their impact on communities at risk and to identifying and analysing gender differences in coping strategies and risk management;

(e) Document good practices and lessons-learned from effective community-based strategies where women as well as men have been involved in planning and decision-making; and compile information on good practices and lessons-learned in such a way as to provide guidance for policy makers and programme planners;

(f) Develop, test and validate gender-sensitive tools, methodologies, indicators and other instruments in disaster risk management at local levels, including through participatory action research and diagnosis, training, the use of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and other methods, for mapping hazards and vulnerability in order to improve the effectiveness of disaster risk management at the local and national levels;

(g) Collect data disaggregated by sex and information related to environmental and disaster risk management, including gender aspects of climate change, biodiversity and other major international environmental concerns;

(h) Collect demographic and socio-economic data disaggregated by sex on disaster occurrence and associated loss, including data on the impacts of natural disaster on the employment of women and men in the formal and informal sector.

7. Actions at the international level

39. Governments at all levels and international organizations, including the United Nations system and financial institutions, as appropriate, should:

(a) Introduce gender mainstreaming into all disaster management actions and make management at all levels accountable;

(b) Establish financing facilities and provide access to other financial and human resources to local governments, NGOs and community-based organizations in order to implement gender-sensitive environmental management and disaster risk reduction strategies and activities;

(c) Include technological and conflict-induced disasters in all disaster risk reduction activities and consider the gender dimension of these disasters;

(d) Invite coordination mechanism at international level, in particular the Advisory Committee on Coordination, to mainstream a gender perspective in environmental management and disaster risk reduction activities;

(e) Report to existing and future international monitoring bodies, including human rights treaty bodies, on cross-sectoral and gender-sensitive environmental management and disaster risk reduction strategies and activities, in particular within the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and the 10-year review processes for the Yokohama Disaster Reduction Action Plan for a Safer World and the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

III. Eradicating poverty, including through the empowerment of women throughout their life cycle in a globalizing world

A. United Nations activities to eradicate poverty among women

40. The challenge of poverty eradication is a high priority on both international and national agendas in the new millennium. Through global United Nations conferences and summits, a set of interconnected and mutually reinforcing goals, targets and strategies on combating poverty have been agreed upon by Governments. These events also highlighted the different causes and impacts of poverty on women and men, as well as their respective capacities to cope with it, and, consequently, emphasized the importance of directly addressing such gender differences in poverty eradication efforts.

41. In the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women,[4] the international community recognized that women and men experience poverty differently and agreed that

these differences need to be taken into account if the causes of poverty are to be adequately understood and dealt with. The Platform highlighted the empowerment of women as a critical factor in the eradication of poverty. Emphasizing the multidimensional nature of poverty, the Platform recommended that poverty eradication strategies should address such factors as autonomy, dignity and participation in decision-making. Furthermore, Governments agreed to promote the gender mainstreaming strategy in all policies and programmes, including those aimed at poverty eradication.

42. Since 1995, the scope of United Nations activities aimed at poverty eradication in general, and those targeting women in particular, have been expanded and broadened. At an earlier stage, the Commission on the Status of Women identified opportunities for supporting women living in extreme poverty through national development planning.[21] In the context of reviewing the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the Commission, in its resolution 40/9, placed particular emphasis on the empowerment and autonomy of women as well as the improvement of their social, economic and political status as being essential for the eradication of poverty. This approach subsequently influenced the work of other intergovernmental bodies, in particular that of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly.

43. In its work in this area, the Economic and Social Council has highlighted the need to undertake gender analysis and collect data disaggregated by sex in all poverty eradication policies and programmes. Agreed conclusions 1996/1 of the Economic and Social Council provided practical guidance on mainstreaming a gender perspective in poverty eradication in the activities of the United Nations.[22] The Council dealt with the specific role of work and employment in poverty eradication, with particular emphasis on the empowerment and advancement of women. In its Ministerial Communiqué of 1999,[23] the Council recognized the differences between women and men in their access to labour markets and their opportunities to redress poverty, and highlighted the need for gender-specific policies in those areas.

44. Within the framework of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, 1997-2006,[24] the General Assembly repeatedly stressed the need for gender mainstreaming in poverty eradication policies and programmes and the use of gender analysis as a tool for integrating a gender dimension into activities aimed at poverty eradication.[25]

45. The issue of women's empowerment and poverty eradication was further addressed during the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace in the twenty-first century". The outcome document called in particular for the reduction of the disproportionate number of women living in poverty through national poverty eradication programmes, with a focus on the empowerment of women, including short- and long-term goals (A/S-23/3, para. 73 (d)).

46. The United Nations commitment to poverty eradication culminated in 2000 in the adoption of the Millennium Declaration (General Assembly resolution 55/2) by heads of State and Government. Putting forward a series of development goals, the heads of State and Government resolved to halve, by 2015, the proportion of the world's people whose income is less than a dollar a day and to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty.

47. In order to assist the Commission on the Status of Women in its work during the forty-sixth session, the Division for the Advancement of Women convened an expert group meeting on the theme "Empowerment of women throughout the life cycle as a transformative strategy for poverty eradication", which was hosted by the Government of India in New Delhi, from 26 to 29 November 2001. In examining this topic, experts placed emphasis on policies and programmes for women that promote their empowerment within the context of globalization. The following sections and recommendations draw from the report of the expert group.

B. Empowerment of women as a transformative strategy for poverty eradication

1. The empowerment strategy

48. The empowerment of women can be defined as the processes by which women take control and ownership of their lives by acquiring the ability to make strategic choices.[26] Empowerment has intrinsic value, while at the same time it may contribute to

poverty eradication or to the enhanced well-being of others. Empowerment is both a goal and a process.

49. Women's empowerment is a process that must be driven by women themselves. Empowerment involves women, individually or collectively, in acquiring a critical awareness of themselves as women (identity), their social reality, its causes, its changeability and the agency or source of change.[26] While empowerment can only be acquired by an individual through conscious action, it also involves changes at two additional, mutually reinforcing, levels: changes within the group/community; and changes in the institutions of society.

50. Empowerment involves the transformation of power relations by which women move from being objects within relationships of subordination to becoming subjects, controlling their own lives. It addresses those power structures that subordinate women at different societal levels — household, community, nation — and which must be transformed so that women can take full control over their lives.

51. Empowerment processes can be facilitated by development agents, such as the State, NGOs and women's groups and movements. These development agents can address the social and structural barriers to women's empowerment, including value systems that devalue women, the absence of jobs or lack of medical facilities, through appropriate economic strategies (that create more and better jobs), through public investments in infrastructure (that make health and other services accessible to women), and by changing laws and societal norms (that facilitate women's ability to exercise their rights and define their own goals and strategies). However, it is only through women's own agency, awareness of gender power relations and increased self-esteem and self-confidence that these enabling structural conditions can facilitate meaningful empowerment.

2. Empowerment of women during the life cycle

52. Empowerment occurs in different ways over the entire lifespan and varies at different stages in the life cycle. There are particular opportunities and vulnerabilities that are associated with different stages. Many stage-specific vulnerabilities pertain to women's reproductive years, including their decision-making capacity, the implications of different reproductive technologies and phenomena such as female prenatal sex selection. In many societies, adolescence and young womanhood are stages in the life cycle where women may be severely disempowered within family relationships, their economic lives, their relationships with service agencies and under the law.

53. It is crucial to identify specific constraints and needs of women throughout the life cycle. For example, the selective allocation of resources for education and health, which, in some contexts, favours boys over girls, is an impediment to gender equality in economic and social sectors as well as to overall poverty eradication. Education and health investment during the early phase of women's lives can result in high dividends of empowerment, which can contribute to breaking the cycle of inter-generational transfer of poverty. Adolescent girls, in particular, are often the first to drop out of school, losing the chance for education and training that could enable them to have better lives.

54. In most countries, a demographic shift points to an increasing number of elderly women. As a result of this phenomenon, large numbers of older women face impoverishment, especially in situations of privatization of basic social services and cuts in social benefits provided by the State. In addition, in countries with a high incidence of HIV/AIDS, the number of older women in the population has increased due to the loss of younger adult females. Changed family structures create new demands on elderly women, who are becoming main caretakers for young children as well as HIV/AIDS-infected relatives. Older women also often assume greater responsibilities in rural production systems due to the rural-to-urban migration favouring out-migration of both young men and women.

55. The incidence of both poverty and vulnerability among women over the life cycle is also influenced by class, race, ethnicity, location and religious practices. Strategies for reducing vulnerability and enhancing empowerment should be attentive to such differences.

3. Poverty eradication through the empowerment of women

56. Applying an empowerment approach to poverty eradication would require that women play a central role in defining the causes and impacts of poverty and how these should be addressed. It also necessitates

looking beyond the economic aspects of women's poverty to a more holistic approach to their well-being.

57. The empowerment approach to poverty eradication takes on even greater significance in the light of the shift in the definition of poverty itself from a physiological model of deprivation, focused on the failure to meet basic material and physiological needs, to a social model of deprivation focused on such elements as lack of autonomy, loss of dignity and powerlessness. In 1997, UNDP reinforced this shift by introducing, in its *Human Development Report*,[27] a concept of human poverty based on a conceptual framework[28] that focused on the denial of opportunities and choices for living a basic or "tolerable" human life.[29] In this approach, poverty is conceptualized in terms of the absence of certain basic capabilities to function,[30] rather than simply income poverty.

58. The concept of human poverty has been instrumental in clarifying the relationship between gender inequalities and poverty by exposing the causes as well as the symptoms of poverty. Women are more vulnerable to poverty because of inequalities in access to productive resources, lack of control over their own labour and earned income, gender-biases in labour markets, and the exclusion that women experience in a variety of economic, social and political institutions. Additionally, women experience poverty as a direct result of the differences between the roles of men and women ascribed to them by existing norms, practices and institutions.

59. This evolution in the understanding of poverty has led to important changes in approaches to poverty eradication by addressing the unequal division of resources and responsibilities between men and women within a household and recognizing the household as a site of both tension and cooperation.[31] By focusing on gender differences in education, training, health services and life expectancy, it also becomes possible to examine how gender inequalities perpetuate and reproduce poverty on the level of individuals, families and communities, from one generation to the next.[32]

60. A successful agenda for eradicating poverty and its gendered effects requires the dismantling of values, structures and processes that maintain women's subordination and justify inequality in access to political, social and economic resources.[32] This implies initiatives explicitly aimed at the empowerment of women. During the five-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in 2000, it was reaffirmed that "the success of anti-poverty policies and programmes depends on the extent to which these policies and programmes empower people living in poverty in general and women in particular".[33]

61. From the outset, the design of poverty eradication strategies should include a gender analysis of power structures and relations in each specific context. A gender perspective should be reflected throughout all stages of the preparation, implementation and follow-up of poverty eradication efforts. In other words, the consequences of the strategies for women and girls, and for men and boys, must be analysed at all stages. Institutional capacity, supported by gender-specific expertise, is critical to ensuring the implementation of the gender mainstreaming strategy in poverty eradication policies.

62. Working towards women's empowerment as an effective strategy for poverty eradication also requires the involvement of men. Initiatives must contribute to the transformation of traditional attitudes and roles and unequal divisions of family responsibilities between women and men. The benefits that the whole of society can derive from greater participation of women in decision-making structures, as well as from men's greater involvement in family responsibilities, should be made clear, particularly in the context of poverty eradication strategies.

4. Measurement of poverty and empowerment

63. Unless both empowerment and poverty are adequately measured, it is difficult to understand the links between women's empowerment and poverty reduction or to determine if the methods employed actually succeed in empowering women, or reducing poverty among women.

64. Despite the fact that both empowerment and poverty represent rather complex and multidimensional phenomena that cannot be captured by single indicators, the tendency to interpret poverty exclusively in terms of income or consumption remains very strong, and the global debate on poverty still tends to focus on an interpretation of poverty in money-metric terms. The latest data from the World Bank are based on the money-metric indicator of one dollar a day. However, these figures do not reflect the more holistic perception of human poverty, nor do they

reflect the number of women in poverty. In the absence of sex disaggregated income poverty measures (given that income poverty is measured on the household unit without any regard for intra-household processes of distribution), it is difficult to precisely monitor the situation of women in poverty compared to that of men.

65. Given the shortcomings of conventional income poverty measures, alternative indicators have been proposed to measure well-being and destitution. These social indicators have included such measures as life expectancy, maternal mortality, educational levels, nutritional levels, access to safe drinking water and perceptions of well-being. These social indicators have been used to construct composite indicators of human poverty, such as the Human Poverty Index (HPI).[34]

66. However, even simple indicators such as gross school enrolment ratios (for different levels of education), are not available in many countries and regions, and are provided only on an irregular basis in many others. According to the *Human Development Report 2000*, the data for HPI are available only for 103 countries; and wage data disaggregated by sex are available from the International Labour Organization (ILO) for only 46 countries.[35] All the figures and global estimates mask important regional and subregional variations in poverty reduction, as well as variations between the situation of women and men.

67. Even less progress has been made in the measurement of empowerment. The gender empowerment measure (GEM), which was introduced in the UNDP *Human Development Report*, examines the economic, political and professional participation of women and men. It focuses on three variables: income-earning power; share in professional and managerial jobs; and share of parliamentary seats.[36] It does not capture many aspects of empowerment, particularly within the household, in community life or in rural areas.

68. In order to better understand and monitor poverty and empowerment, a mix of quantitative and qualitative indicators, conventional and participatory gender-sensitive surveys at the local, national and international levels are required.

69. The United Nations Statistical Commission serves as intergovernmental focal point for the review of conference indicators[37] and thus contributes technical expertise to the ongoing debate at intergovernmental level on indicators to support the implementation of the major United Nations conferences and summits of the 1990s, including the development goals of the Millennium Declaration. This work takes on increased relevance and urgency as the United Nations system endeavours to achieve the Millennium Declaration goal of reducing by half the number of persons living in extreme poverty by 2015. It also constitutes an opportunity for improving the measurement of empowerment and poverty among women.

C. Responding to the challenges of poverty eradication among women within the context of globalization

70. Globalization has become a catchall term for many different economic, social, political and cultural processes. These processes are reflected in increasing trade, labour and financial flows, expansion of technological exchange and rapid growth in the use of information and communication technologies, as well as the increasing spread of cultural practices, legal and judicial norms and political systems. As pointed out in the World Bank publication, *Entering the 21st Century: World Development Report 1999/2000*, globalization provokes strong reactions, both positive and negative. Globalization is praised for the opportunities it brings, such as access to markets and technology transfer, but it is also feared and opposed because of the instability and risks that can accompany the process.

71. These contradictory aspects of globalization were highlighted by the heads of State and Government who, in the Millennium Declaration, identified as a central challenge the need to ensure that globalization becomes a positive force for all the world's people. In pursuing development and poverty eradication, the heads of State and Government resolved to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable.

72. The effects of globalization on development, poverty reduction and gender relations in different countries are complex, primarily because of the increasing interaction among the various components that characterize globalization, as well as other elements such as a country's resource endowments, infrastructure, labour market policies, skills and educational levels, socio-cultural norms and the

position of women and men in the processes of production and reproduction.

73. There are a number of important areas that require further attention in the implementation of successful poverty eradication strategies based on the empowerment of women in a globalizing world. Some of these, including democratization, social services and fiscal policy, taxation policies, employment, trade liberalization, financial services, information and communication technologies and development cooperation, are reviewed below.

74. An analysis of the recent experiences of many countries in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Eastern Europe and Latin America indicate that there was no linear relationship between economic liberalization and increased economic growth, development and reduced poverty.[38] Studies such as the UNCTAD *Trade and Development Report*[39] (1997) and the UNDP *Human Development Report* (1997 and 1999) suggest that economic growth fostered by economic liberalization can be accompanied by increased inequality and a decline in living standards. The United Nations report, entitled "1999 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development" (A/54/227), focused on changes in women's employment patterns and related gains and losses in the framework of globalization.

75. The current period of globalization has coincided with the wave of democratization sweeping through much of Eastern and Central Europe, Latin America, Africa and Asia. The political processes associated with democratization have facilitated the development of women's groups and movements at national, regional and global levels, and have given greater visibility and voice to women's demands for political representation, human rights protection and improved economic and social conditions. However, the equitable participation of women still remains a central issue as some existing institutions that determine the content of debates regarding globalization still lack meaningful representation of women.

76. Governance refers essentially to the manner in which power is exercised and distributed in society, how decisions are taken and how citizens have their say. It touches upon issues such as the interaction between the State and civil society, legal frameworks, public administration, economic development, development policies, peace and security. Characteristics of good governance include inclusiveness, transparency, accountability, predictability, integrity, equity and participation. Good governance requires that women participate equally with men in exercising power and that the governing structures reflect their concerns and interests.[40]

77. Good governance is crucial for achieving the goals of poverty reduction in a gender-sensitive manner. There is evidence that countries with weak or undemocratic governance structures and processes are more likely to perform poorly on both poverty reduction and gender equality. Human rights, entitlements, networking, a public voice and social capital, as well as economic participation and access to resources, are essential for poor women if they are to develop their capabilities and gain access to, and increase opportunities for, active political participation and influence at all levels.

78. Public funding and delivery of social services has been a cornerstone for gender equality and poverty eradication in advanced welfare States. The shifting expectations concerning the role of the State in welfare provision and the adoption of austerity measures as part of the dynamics of economic restructuring and integration of countries into the global economy have, in many contexts, entailed the downsizing of public services and the re-allocation of service delivery to commercial interests, charitable groups, NGOs and families. Ultimately what this means is that claims of greater efficiency in social spending through a partnership of State and civil society may in fact rely increasingly on women's unpaid work, whether in their capacity as mothers, grandmothers and wives, or as NGO and community workers. As a result, poor women in particular experience increased vulnerability without access to adequate safety nets. Overwork, as a result of increased social and familial responsibilities, reduces the capacity of poor women to take advantage of new economic opportunities in a globalizing world. Reorientation of public expenditures therefore has clear implications for the achievement of gender equality goals. The mobilization and allocation of resources for social protection and gender-sensitive fiscal policies can provide an enabling environment for effective poverty reduction (see A/S-23/3, para. 36 and 58 (b) and (d) of the Beijing Platform for Action).

79. Following the Fourth World Conference on Women, gender analysis of public budgets emerged as an important instrument for establishing transparent, participatory and gender-sensitive resource allocations

at national level. As of today, more than 40 countries have gained experience with a gender analysis of government budgets, including Australia, Brazil, Chile, the Philippines, South Africa, the United Republic of Tanzania, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, where it proved to be an effective measure in holding Governments accountable to women. The importance of mainstreaming gender perspectives in budget processes has also been reflected in the preparatory process for the International Conference on Financing for Development, including in the report of the Secretary-General to the Preparatory Committee[41] and in the revised outcome document presented by the Facilitator.[42]

80. Taxation policies also affect poverty reduction. Recent studies have shown that the unit of taxation (the individual or household), the balance between direct and indirect taxation, the progressiveness of the tax schedule and the availability of specific tax rebates or deductions such as childcare expenses have significant gender effects. For example, sales and value-added taxes disproportionately impact on women and lower income groups who pay a larger part of their earnings through such taxes. This impact can be reduced if taxes are imposed selectively on luxury goods, while exempting basic food and clothing items.[43]

81. Women's access to more and better jobs has been widely recognized as important in facilitating poverty eradication efforts. In a globalizing world characterized by vastly expanded trade flows, new export sectors in agriculture, manufacturing and services can increase employment of women and improve their welfare through self-esteem and autonomy. However, not all groups of women benefit equally from trade-related gains. Some groups of women (predominantly young women and rural migrants) are represented in large numbers in export-oriented industries, while others (older women in state-owned enterprises and in import-competing industries) have suffered job losses as a consequence of economic restructuring and trade liberalization. Positive gains in the demand for labour may, however, be negated by lack of compliance with adequate standards of working conditions, in particular where there are weak worker organizations, leading to the exploitation of workers, lack of opportunities for long-term skill development and uncertainty of the long-term sustainability of employment due to volatility of investment flows and relocation of industries. Furthermore, the extent to which increased trade has led to employment expansion appears to be geographically uneven and largely confined to a small group of developing countries.

82. Women also constitute a significant proportion of the labour force employed in low-paying irregular jobs, including contract, part-time and at-home work.[44] Households relying on such forms of employment often generate very low levels of income that barely meet subsistence needs. Irregular work situations also make it more difficult for women to establish rights and entitlements as social benefits are commonly linked to full-time employment.

83. The impact of trade liberalization on the agricultural sector and livelihoods in many developing countries remains an issue of concern. The shift from food production to the production of export crops heightens the vulnerability of small and marginal farmers, which in many regional contexts include significant numbers of women farmers. Such situations also negatively affect household food security, with women and girls being exposed to an increasing risk of nutritional insecurity due to biases in the intra-household process of food distribution in some regions.

84. Women's access to financial services, especially in the form of microcredit and microfinance, has been identified as a key strategy for addressing women's poverty, contributing to overall poverty eradication. Such programmes provide women with opportunities to establish their own businesses, increase their productivity and earnings and escape their indebtedness to moneylenders, middlemen and traders, thus strengthening their social and economic position. Microcredit programmes throughout the developing world, especially in South Asia and Africa, have played a significant role in the promotion of women's economic rights, self-employment and income generation, especially in poor households.[45]

85. There is, however, a growing concern among women's organizations, researchers and practitioners regarding the manner in which microcredit and microfinance programmes are promoted. There is little empirical evidence to support a linear relationship between microcredit, poverty alleviation and gender equality and empowerment of women. There are also few studies that explore the extent to which microfinance programmes have supported the non-economic dimensions of women's empowerment and

reduced their exploitation and subordination. In addition, microcredit services often do not address women's need for other financial services such as insurance, savings and technical assistance, and do not always result in business growth for microenterprises.[46]

86. The pace of technological change, especially in the field of information and communication technologies in recent years, provides an important new tool to support and accelerate the empowerment of women and the fight against poverty. For example, many women worldwide are making effective use of the Internet and of e-mail technology to create new income and employment opportunities, including e-commerce, better services in health and education and to expand networking, advocacy, dissemination and exchange of information. However, most of the world's poorest women and men still do not have access to these facilities. Issues such as cost, locational bias and time constraints pose impediments to the diffusion of these technologies and their effective use by women, and hold the potential for the exclusion and isolation of women from the use of information and communication technologies for development.

87. Development cooperation remains critical for the eradication of poverty, especially among women and children, and especially in the least developed countries, yet levels of official development assistance (ODA) have been declining until recently, with only five countries having reached, or exceeded, the goal of expending 0.7 per cent of gross national product (GNP) for ODA. ODA can have an important role in promoting empowerment of women. As there is increased emphasis on basing ODA on policies and programmes that are owned by Governments and civil society in recipient countries, consultative and participatory processes in the elaboration of such policies need to ensure that women's groups and networks can make their voices heard. The focus on expanding human capital and productive capacity within developing countries needs to recognize the critical development inputs of women and address the constraints hindering the full development of their potential. Bringing gender perspectives to bear in the ODA process can also ensure a more accurate understanding of the development potential of a country — its resources, opportunities and challenges — and enable more appropriate responses and sustainable development outcomes.

88. The debt burden of many developing countries and their related servicing obligations, as aspects influencing development potential, can have disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable sectors of the population, such as women and girls in poverty, especially when they lead to cuts in public expenditures in areas such as education, health, housing and other basic social services, and should thus be considered from a gender perspective.

D. Recommendations

89. There are a number of opportunities to affect the interplay between the elements of the theme chosen by the Commission on the Status of Women, namely eradicating poverty, the empowerment of women, the life cycle and a globalizing world, to enhance gender equality. Building on the outcome document of the twenty-third special session (A/S-23/3), actions could target these elements individually, as well as in their relation to each other. The Commission may therefore wish to consider the following recommendations.

1. Measurement of poverty and empowerment of women

90. Governments, international organizations, including the United Nations system, development agencies and research institutions, as appropriate, should:

(a) Improve the collection, compilation and dissemination of timely, reliable data disaggregated by sex and age, in particular those that will increase capacity to measure, assess and monitor poverty among women and men;

(b) Encourage and support work to develop quantitative and qualitative indicators to measure poverty among women and men throughout the life cycle, including income poverty and human poverty, and develop indicators to measure empowerment and progress in the empowerment of women at different stages of their life cycle;

(c) Undertake research on the correlation between women's empowerment and poverty eradication among women, focus on context-specific qualitative and quantitative methods and indicators, and clarify the impact of this correlation;

(d) Create national and international databases on essential data and indicators disaggregated by sex and age to measure and monitor poverty among women, including income poverty and human poverty, to facilitate the formulation of more successful gender-sensitive poverty eradication strategies;

(e) Develop methods for assessing and monitoring the impact of poverty eradication policies and programmes on both women and men and, based on such methods, assess the impact of particular policies on achieving poverty eradication goals, especially those established with regard to poor women;

The Statistical Commission and Economic and Social Council should:

(f) In working on indicators to support the implementation of the goals of the major United Nations conferences and summits of the 1990s, including those of the Millennium Declaration, ensure that gender perspectives are fully reflected and undertake efforts to improve capacity to measure empowerment and poverty among women.

2. Empowerment of women as a transformative strategy for poverty eradication

91. Governments, international organizations, including the United Nations system and development agencies, research institutions, civil society, including private sector, trade unions and non-governmental organizations, as appropriate, should:

(a) Ensure that all actions to achieve the poverty eradication goals established in the Millennium Declaration include the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable;

(b) Ensure that national consultative and participatory processes for the design, review and implementation of national poverty eradication policies are undertaken with the full participation of women, including women's groups and organizations; and also ensure that existing poverty eradication policies incorporate gender perspectives and an empowerment approach;

(c) Conduct regular evaluation and monitoring exercises of poverty eradication policies and programmes, focus in particular on their impact on women and the empowerment of women throughout their life cycle, and compile good practices and lessons learned so as to increase the sharing of knowledge;

(d) Improve the capacity of national machinery for the advancement of women to act as catalyst for gender mainstreaming, and to serve as an effective facilitator for the consultation and participation of women in the development and implementation of national poverty eradication efforts;

(e) Develop and strengthen the capacity of line ministries, especially those responsible for macroeconomic and development policies, to undertake gender analysis in the development and implementation of poverty eradication policies and strategies;

(f) Improve economic and political literacy training, mass media campaigns on gender equality and the use of new information and communication technologies to enhance women's capacity and facilitate empowerment;

(g) Regularly undertake surveys of factors that constitute obstacles to the empowerment of women, such as violence against women, the persistence of norms, attitudes and stereotypes that hinder the realization of gender equality and discriminatory laws and practices in the economic and social areas, and identify and implement pro-active and remedial policy interventions to address these factors;

(h) Identify the increased risks of poverty faced by older women, and put in place measures to ensure their economic independence and social security, equality and participation.

3. Responding to the challenges of poverty eradication among women within the context of globalization

92. Governments, international organizations, including the United Nations system and development agencies, research institutions, civil society, including private sector, trade unions and non-governmental organizations, as appropriate, should:

(a) Conduct country and regional studies to increase the understanding of the impact of globalization on women, especially those in poverty, particularly with regard to trade, financial flows, macroeconomic policies and information and communication technologies, and use the insights gained to improve the integration of gender

perspectives in discussions on globalization and interdependence at national, regional and international levels;

(b) Establish, through participatory processes, the priorities for national budgets and resource allocations, in particular in the pursuit of social development, economic and fiscal goals, ensure that these priorities support the achievement of gender equality goals and meet the needs of poor women and apply gender analysis to revenue raising, expenditure plans and reviews and the provision of social services;

(c) Strengthen the role of the public sector in the provision and delivery of adequate and affordable public and social services, especially in areas such as health, education, child and elderly care, transportation and access to housing, water and sanitation in order to meet the needs of poor women;

(d) Shift from residual and crisis-related safety nets to the development of permanent and sustainable social security systems through the different stages of the life cycle of women, especially in developing countries;

(e) Ensure that any planned privatization of social services and social protection does not have a negative or disproportionate impact on women and the achievement of gender equality goals, and progressively extend social protection systems to cover economic sectors dominated by women, such as the informal economy and casual and flexible forms of work;

(f) Study the gender implications of existing taxation systems, determine, in relation to the particular socio-economic realities of the respective country, the possible differential impact of changes in taxation systems on women and men, and adjust taxation policies to ensure that they do not disproportionately affect women, especially women in poverty, and are supportive of gender equality goals;

(g) Ensure that women participate fully in all institutions that shape the debate on globalization, and integrate gender perspectives;

(h) Identify and address the differential social and economic impacts of changing trade patterns on women and men, develop strategies to ensure that women, especially poor women, are protected against trade-related job losses and benefit from job-creation and develop programmes to expand access for women producers to trade opportunities, including through e-commerce;

(i) Ensure that gender perspectives are integrated into the preparations and the decisions and agreements to emanate from the International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in Monterrey, Mexico, in March 2002;

(j) Increase the mainstream financial services available to women, in particular to poor and rural women, such as credit, insurance, savings mobilization and technical assistance and support, in order to improve women's capacity to achieve economic independence and poverty reduction and to enable the full development of their potential in contributing to national and local development goals;

(k) Strengthen women's rights to productive resources, including land and savings, to meet the social and economic needs of women in poverty and promote their economic opportunities;

(l) Review all types of microcredit and microfinance programmes and assess whether they enhance women's capabilities, status, bargaining power and empowerment, and revise them to ensure that they do not reinforce women's traditional roles within households and communities to the detriment of their productive capacities;

(m) Improve the potential of microcredit and microfinance programmes to effectively support the poorest and most vulnerable women, especially through the provision of expanded financial services that include training, technical support and development of business opportunities;

(n) Include women's groups and organizations in participatory mechanisms for the elaboration of national information and communication technologies for development to ensure that such policies reflect their needs and aspirations and expand women's, especially poor women's, access to and use of those technologies in areas such as governance, health, education and commerce;

(o) Bring gender perspectives to bear in the ODA process, including specific provisions for meeting the needs of poor women in areas such as education, training, employment and health;

(p) Ensure that solutions regarding external debt, debt servicing and relief incorporate a gender

perspective and do not disproportionately affect women, especially women living in poverty.

Notes

[1] A/54/132/Add.1.

[2] A/CONF.172/9.

[3] *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigenda), vol. I, *Resolutions Adopted by the Conference*, resolution 1, annex II.

[4] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13) chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

[5] *From Beijing to Beijing + 5, Review and appraisal of the progress made towards the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.01.IV.3), Pt. 3.

[6] General Assembly resolution S-23/3, annex, paras. 46, 56 and 86 (a).

[7] *World Disasters Report 2001: Focus on recovery*, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, p. 11.

[8] Irene Dankelman, "Gender and Environment: Lessons to learn", in Masasuchi Sekigucki ed., *Encyclopaedia of Life Support Systems*, UNESCO, Oxford 2001.

[9] FAO, "Gender and food security", see: http://www.fao.org/Gender/en/agri-e.htm.

[10] ILO, "Key indicators of the labour market", Geneva, 1999, table 4.

[11] Hesphina Rukato, "Popularizing the climate change debate", in *Point de Vue*, No. 14, October 2001.

[12] Fatma Denton: "Gendered Impacts of Climate Change — A Human Security Dimension", in *ENERGIA News*, vol. 3, Issue 3, October 2000.

[13] Shubh Kumar Range, "Environmental management and disaster risk reduction: a gender perspective", paper presented at the expert group meeting on "Environmental management and the mitigation of natural disasters: a gender perspective", Ankara, 6-9 November 2001.

[14] World Bank "Gender and Post-Reconstruction: the case of Hurricane Mitch in Honduras and Nicaragua, 2000, p. 5.

[15] Maureen Fordham, "Challenging boundaries: a gender perspective on early warning in disaster and environmental management", paper presented at the expert group meeting on "Environmental management and the mitigation of natural disasters: a gender perspective", Ankara, 6-9 November 2001.

[16] Maureen Fordham, "The place of gender in earthquake vulnerability and mitigation", paper presented at the Second Euro Conference on Global Change and Catastrophic Risk Management — Earthquake Risks in Europe, International Institute of Advanced Systems Analysis, Laxenburg, Austria, 6-9 July 2000, p. 4.

[17] See Angeles Arenas Ferriz, "The relevance of considering a gender perspective in damage assessment and recovery strategies, a case study from El Salvador, Central America", paper presented at the expert group meeting on "Environmental management and the mitigation of natural disasters: a gender perspective", Ankara, 6-9 November 2001.

[18] Elaine Enarson, "Gender and Natural Disasters", ILO InFocus Programme on Crisis Response and Reconstruction, Working Paper 1, ILO Recovery and Reconstruction Programme, Geneva, 2000, p. 12.

[19] Samia Galal Saad, "Environmental management and natural disaster mitigation: a Middle Eastern perspective", paper presented at the expert group meeting on "Environmental management and the mitigation of natural disasters: a gender perspective", Ankara, 6-9 November 2001, p. 7.

[20] Division for the Advancement of Women online discussion (*E-forum*) on "gender equality, environmental management, and natural disaster mitigation", 24 September to 2 November 2001, see http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/env_manage/.

[21] E/CN.6/1993/3.

[22] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Supplement No. 3* (A/51/3), chap. III.

[23] See ibid., *Fifty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 3* (A/54/3), chap. III.

[24] General Assembly resolution 50/107.

[25] Most recently in General Assembly resolution 56/207.

[26] See N. Kabeer, "Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment", in *Discussing Women's Empowerment — Theory and Practice*, SIDA Studies, 2001, No. 3.

[27] *Human Development Report 1997*, UNDP, New York, Oxford University Press, 1997.

[28] Based on A. Sen, "Poverty and Famines: An essay on entitlement and deprivation", Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1981: A. Sen, "Capability and well-being", in M. Nussbaum and A. Sen, eds., *The Quality of Life*,

Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1993.

[29] *Human Development Report 1997*, UNDP, New York, Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 15.

[30] Sen's main idea is that poverty should include both what we can and cannot do (capabilities), the commodity requirements of these capabilities which differ interpersonally and over time and what we are or are not doing (functionings). According to this perspective, poverty represents the absence of some basic abilities to function. Functionings, in turn, represent the doing and being of a person.

[31] L. Beneria and S. Bisnath, "Poverty and Gender: An Analysis for Action", in Frank J. Lechner and John Boli, eds., *The Globalization Reader*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishers, 1999.

[32] N. Cagatay, "Gender and Poverty" UNDP, Working Paper Series, Working Paper No. 5, May 1998.

[33] E/CN.6/2000/PC.2, para. 144.

[34] HPI was introduced alongside the notion of human poverty in the *Human Development Report 1997*. It is composed of the adult illiteracy rate, the percentage of the population not expected to reach age forty and "overall economic provisioning" which is a composite of three indicators: the percentage of people without access to health services, to safe water and the percentage of children under five years of age who are underweight.

[35] *Human Development Report 2000*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 141.

[36] *Human Development Report 1995*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1995.

[37] At the invitation of the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 2000/27.

[38] Report of the expert group meeting on "Empowerment of women throughout the life cycle as a transformative strategy for poverty eradication", New Delhi, 26-29 November 2001.

[39] United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 1997, Trade and Development Report, United Nations publication, 1998.

[40] See the proceedings of the workshop on "Governance, Poverty Reduction and Gender Equality", Vienna, 23-25 April 2001, organized by the United Nations Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality and the OECD/DAC working party on gender equality.

[41] A/AC.257/12, para. 35.

[42] A/AC.257/32.

[43] See M. Floro, "Dynamic Interaction Between Sectoral Policies and Gender issues: Empirical Evidence in the Asia Pacific Region", paper prepared for UNDP and the United Nations Statistical Division Workshop on Integrating Paid and Unpaid Work into National Policies, Seoul, May 1997; and M. Floro, "Gender Dimensions of the Financing for Development Agenda", working paper prepared for UNIFEM in preparation for the International Conference on Financing for Development, 22 April 2001.

[44] A/54/227, chap. III.

[45] A/53/223 provides an overview on the role of microcredit in the eradication of poverty, including a review of recent literature and assessment studies.

[46] See: J. Sebstad and G. Chen, "Overview of Studies on the impact of Microenterprise Credit: Assessing Impact of Microenterprise Services", Management Systems International, Washington, D.C., USAID, 1996; D. Hulme and P. Mosley, "Finance against Poverty: Effective Institutions for Lending to Small Farmers and Micro-enterprises in Developing Countries" Vols. 1 and 2, London, Routledge, 1996; J. Dawson and A. Jeans, "Looking Beyond Credit: Business Development Services and the Promotion of Innovation among Small Producers", Intermediate Technology Publications, London, 1997.